



HELLAWEENIE WHORROR!

Overanalyzing!
& sexuality!

A horror movie review zine
by Maggie age 9

FOREWARD

Howdy pardners!

This lil book contains sketches and mini-essays on the cultural and historical significance of each movie's themes, based on the lectures from Marc Le Sueur's Modern Horror class at CCA.

That class was pretty dope, I highly recommend taking it for VISST-200 credit cuz it's fun and Marc's lectures are entertaining.

The horror genre is highly eroticized and body-focused, so there'll be a bit of focus on sexuality alongside gender, class, and race. If you think that's totally pretentious, cool! Just lookit the drawings then!

I just think the horror genre is real swell, cuz even though it's generally maligned by critics as lowbrow trash, it's a genre with so much freedom in exploring a culture's collective anxieties. You can enjoy the movies on surface value for the creative effects and cool monsters, and you can have fun with readily apparent literary elements that don't require deep reading to understand! That's why horror is good for any audience!

Anyways, please enjoy these drawings and words!

(I tried to find the other essays I wrote about omnisexual genderless capitalist sex god Freddy Krueger, and the nature of pissing oneself in Last House on The Left. But I couldn't find them on my laptop. So I may have to splinter cell into the house I used to live in and dismantle my PC hard drive to find those essays. Wish me luck!)

Table of Contents:



FOREWORD	-
TABLE OF CONTENTS (you are here!)	1
# 1 - (1922) NOSFERATU	3
# 2 - (1968) NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD	5
# 3 - (1974) TEXAS CHAINSAW MASACRE	7
# 4 - (1977) HILLS HAVE EYES	9
# 5 - (1978) HALLOWEEN	11
# 6 - (1984) NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET	13
# 7 - (1996) SCREAM	15
# 8 - (2000) GINGER SNAPS	17
# 9 - (2004) SAW	19
#10 - (2005) HOSTEL	21
#11 - (2008) LET THE RIGHT ONE IN	23
LONG ESSAY - V/H/S AND THE CULT OF HETEROSEXUALITY	24







NOSFERATU

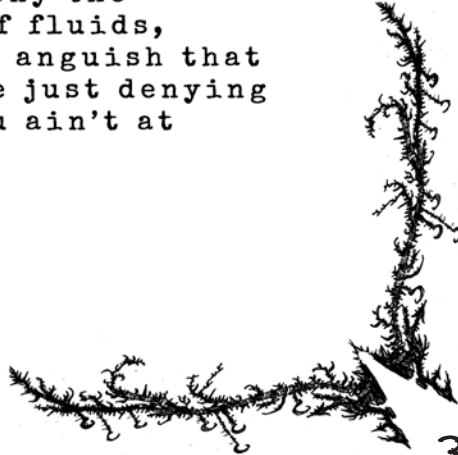
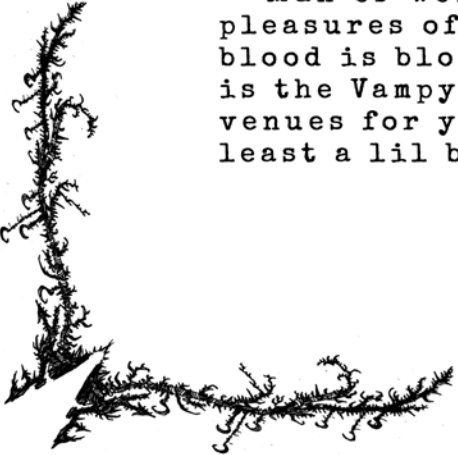
(1922)

"IS THIS YOUR WIFE? WHAT A LOVELY THROAT."

F.W. Murnau's "NOSFERATU" adapts Stoker's "Dracula" into a much less conventionally sexy vampire. Balding, wrinkled, crag-nosed with a rat's buck teeth, Count Orlok is a far cry from suave Draculas and twink Lestats.

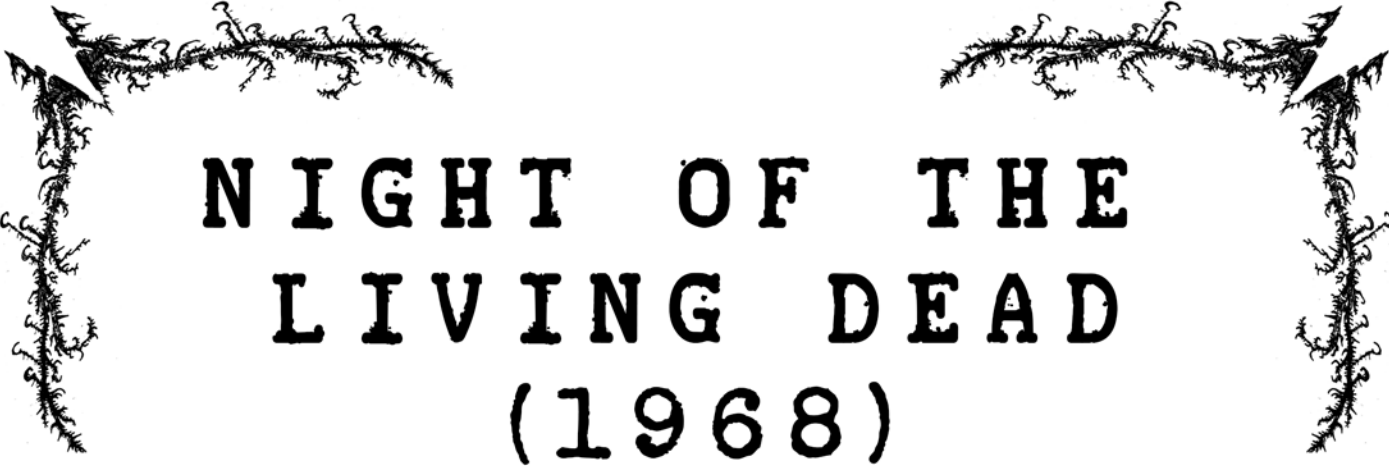
Still, vampires as bisexual rat king vessels of venereal disease? Super sexy.

Count Orlok lusts after the protagonist Harker's wife, suckling her sensitive neck and grabbing her breast during his climax at the end of the film. The film claims "only a woman can break his frightful spell", but in Werner Herzog's 1979 remake, Orlok grabs and sucks on Harker's bleeding finger for a beautiful lingering shot. Has any man attempted to keep the Nosferatu by his side until the cock has crowed?



Man or woman or otherwise, why deny the pleasures of the flesh? Exchange of fluids, blood is blood, blood is sex. In the anguish that is the Vampyre's eternal life, you're just denying venues for your only pleasure if you ain't at least a lil bisexy!





NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

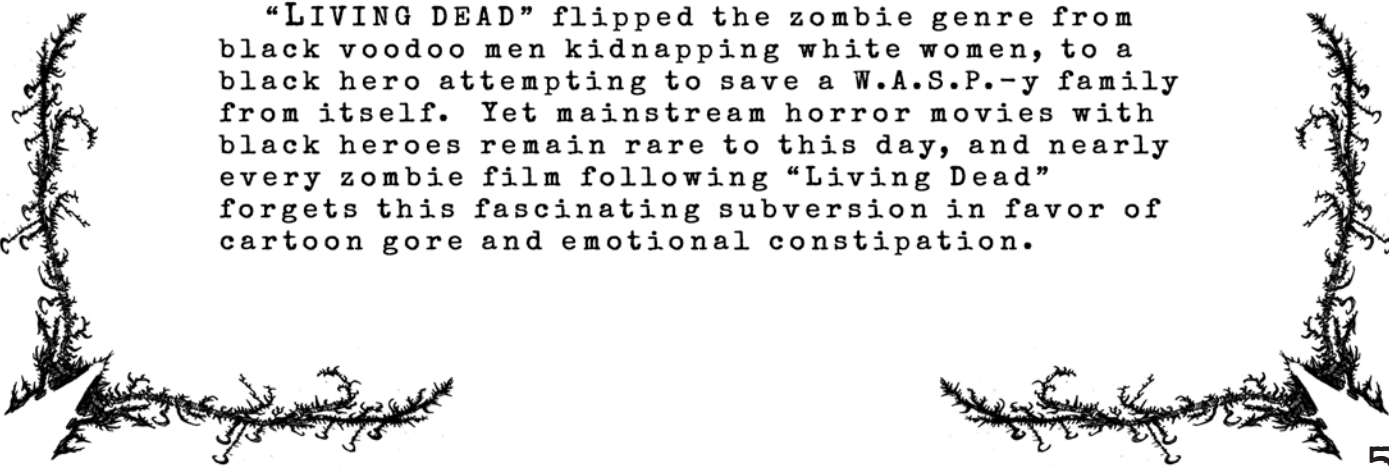
" MILITARY PERSONNEL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES
HAVE BEEN... marginally futile... "

The first "LIVING DEAD" movie paints a stark landscape of the 60's with such obvious symbolism it may as well spraypaint "FUK THE MAN" on the wall.

As befits a post-Vietnam war film, the radio and TV blare incessant doom. The crude grayscale gore recalls newsreels from the era. The now useless government is even implied to be at fault, an irradiated space probe "purposely destroyed" mirrors cold war fears.

In the end, our frustrated hero Ben is killed by a rifle toting militia, led by police with attack dogs (reflecting the police brutality and lynch mobs of the 60's Civil Rights movement).

Romero claims he didn't intend for racial commentary, but art has meaning regardless of intent.



"LIVING DEAD" flipped the zombie genre from black voodoo men kidnapping white women, to a black hero attempting to save a W.A.S.P.-y family from itself. Yet mainstream horror movies with black heroes remain rare to this day, and nearly every zombie film following "Living Dead" forgets this fascinating subversion in favor of cartoon gore and emotional constipation.






TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (1974)

"LOOK WHAT YOUR BROTHER DID TO THE DOOR,
AIN'T HE GOT NO PRIDE IN HIS HOME?"

The hippie 60's fade away, and horror shifts from sci-fi blobs to monsters closer to home.

Namely, humans! Serial killers, incestuous cannibal cults, the guy next door, even the government is still out to get you!

True to the 70's themes, "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" centers on young hippies cannibalized by inbred serial killers. Well, the cannibals only eat humans cuz the government shut down their blue collar slaughterhouse and they're outta work. One of the Sawyer brothers is even an injured 'Nam veteran! Talk about recurring elements, huh?



Ah, but my favorite element of "TCM" is lil Bubba Leatherface! His older brothers put so much pressure on him to kill dinner for the whole family, even when lil brother Bubba clearly suffers from anxiety and mental illness. He cries when he realizes the family house has been broken into, cries when his brothers scold him for breaking the door, cries when he accidentally saws his leg. Leatherface still provides for his family, putting on his best suit, high-heeled cowboy boots and lipstick mask when he's making dinner for his revered grandfather.

(But he's a monster! Don't moe-ify him like that!)



Dude, I know moviemakers give monsters "othered" traits (deformity, mental illness, cognitive disability, nonconforming gender) because they horrify a general audience. But I interpret the lingering shots of Leatherface crying as sympathetic rather than voyeuristic. And perhaps his fluid gender expression was meant to cement him as a Gein-based "pervert" killer. But I find Leatherface to be the most empathetic, fleshed out character in the film.

Everyone is a victim, including the Sawyer family. They have funny and cute Addams Family-esque interactions that are healthier than heroine Sally and Franklin's sibling spite. And if mainstream media must insist those like me are aberrant monsters, why can't we own the term and turn it against them?

Excellent characters, I love the oppressive atmosphere of the film. The sparse industrial slaughterhouse blues score is perfect. And the visuals are beautiful, hazy yellow desert and feverish red Sawyer house punctuated by green eyes.

Plus the film is both spooky AND funny, I love me a man who can do both!





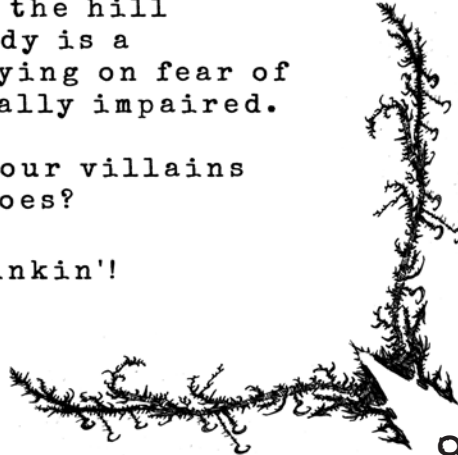
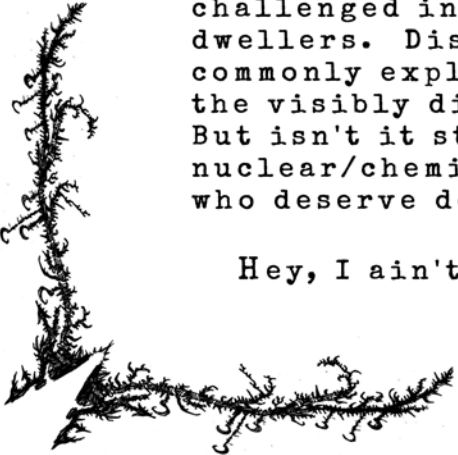
HILLS HAVE EYES (1977)

"BABY'S FAT. YOU FAT. FAT AND JUICY."

(we actually watched the 2007 remake in class, but I'll talk 'bout both films!)

Craven's entry into the HILLBILLY HORROR subgenre treads the same areas as "TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE", with the whole "inbred cannibal family eats dudes in the desert". "HILLS HAVE EYES" goes further into the visceral fear of flesh and lower class white families, however, and the very real horrors of home invasion.



While the Sawyer family of is given a smidge of humanity, the mutants of these hills are even more irredeemable. They not only eat their victims, but penetrate into the supposedly safe space of home to kidnap babies and sexually assault women. Violence is low-tier taboo, but sexual assault and harming children kicks that real gut disgust in.



In the Craven-approved 2007 remake, the government is explicitly complicit in the dehumanization of the mutants. Nuclear tests in the area, without thought of the economically challenged inhabitants, have twisted the hill dwellers. Distortion of the human body is a commonly exploited horror trope, preying on fear of the visibly disabled and developmentally impaired. But isn't it strange using victims of nuclear/chemical war as a basis for your villains who deserve death by hands of the heroes?

Hey, I ain't here to judge! Just thinkin'!





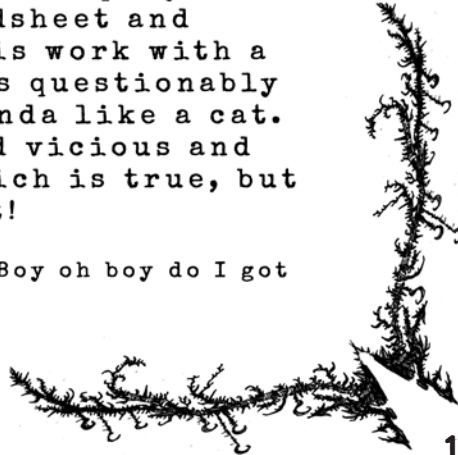
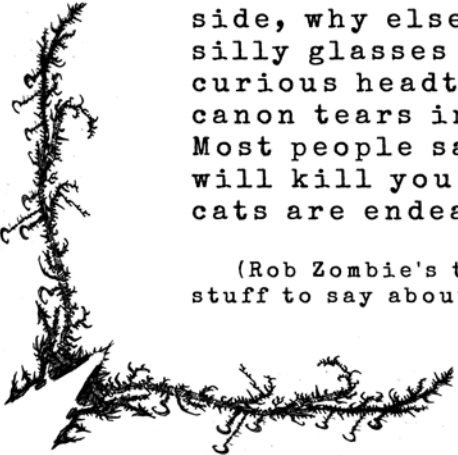
HALLOWEEN

(1978)

" SEE ANYTHING YOU LIKE? "

Incest and cannibals are old hat, now we're getting into killer kids killing their own family! As horror themes leave the fantastical fears of technology creating frankensteins and giant insects, we slash deeper into the sacred ground of home sweet home for nightmare fuel.


While "TCM" is an earlier slasher movie, "HALLOWEEN" is the prime influence of the tropes we expect in the genre. The suburban 50's neighborhood is no longer safe haven in horror movies, you can't trust even your own children. Teens have sex and die, teens do drugs and die, it's as if someone figured out that edgy teenagers were the prime audience for horror movies because of all the taboos them darn kids love to break! Why is it only the viriginal maiden can survive? Well, John Carpenter says it ain't a morality tale.



On the topic of lil Mikey Myers, I must disagree with Dr. Loomis's assessment of Michael as an emotionless "void". Clearly Michael has a playful side, why else would he put on the bedsheet and silly glasses for a murder? Admire his work with a curious headtilt? Heck, he even cries questionably canon tears in a later movie. He's kinda like a cat. Most people say that cats are cold and vicious and will kill you when you're asleep. Which is true, but cats are endearing in their own right!

(Rob Zombie's take is a whole 'nother zine. Boy oh boy do I got stuff to say about greasy metalhead Mikey!)






A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984)

"I'M YOUR BOYFRIEND NOW."


(Oh, Freddy-kun~ sunshine of my life, man of my dreams!)

Another entry in the suburban slasher genre, the refuge of home is violated as well as the sanctuary of bed. The sexual violence of the stalking slasher with a phallic, stabbing weapon was obvious before but Freddy's got THE HORN. Why's he gotta tease Nancy over the phone with a lick on the cheek? How come he gotta be all handsy with her in the bathtub?

He really is the dream boyfriend, always waiting in bed for our final girl Nancy. Robert Englund himself says Freddy is drawn to Nancy as a "worthy adversary", and that he intentionally plays up the "sex innuendo" and "libido". Hey, problematic ship confirmed! The sexually aggressive nature of Freddy Krueger is maintained through the franchise (though Nancy is a recurring girl for Freddy to chase), notably in the wonderfully homoerotic 2nd film. Englund claims he wanted to "get real sexy with [the male protagonist's] mouth". Dude sure is orally oriented, huh?



Freddy doesn't care if you're a boy or girl, but he does prefer girls. Little girls. It's odd that the character of a pedophile kiddie killer became such a beloved icon, but I suppose you can blame that on slapstick/one-liner comedy of the sequels downplaying the child predator aspect. Plus, Robert Englund just got charisma and zazz. Love that guy!



PS read this:
www.advocate.com/film/2015/10/29/robert-englund-and-gay-side-freddy-





SCREAM

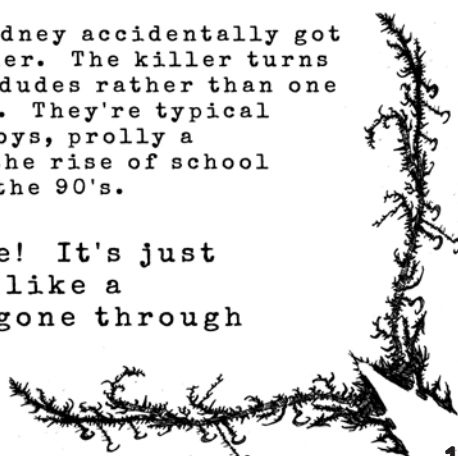
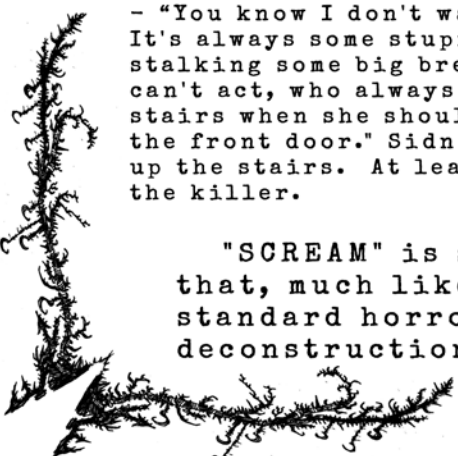
(1996)

"OBVIOUSLY THEY DON'T WATCH ENOUGH MOVIES.
THIS IS STANDARD HORROR MOVIE STUFF."

You remember "SCARY MOVIE"? It's kinda weird that "SCARY MOVIE" spoofs "SCREAM", considering "Scream" is already a parody movie.

Tired of the "misogyny and violence" of the slasher genre, director Craven is clearly jaded, while it's clear that the writer Williamson loves the genre. The film reads like a list of tropes and references with little subversion. Hey, if "Scream" can do it, so can I! This review will be a veritable Buzzfeed listicle:

- First victim says the first "Nightmare on Elm Street", also a Craven film, was scary. But "the rest sucked."
- Ghostface's trivia night! Halloween and Friday the 13th! They're watching The Exorcist later. Then they talk about Jaws.
- Craven is tired of gore yet the movie still delights in victims getting "splatter movie killed-split open end to end."
- "You know I don't watch that shit. It's always some stupid killer stalking some big breasted girl who can't act, who always runs up the stairs when she should be going out the front door." Sidney then runs up the stairs. At least she outwits the killer.
- Ghostface falls on his ghosty face very often, making silly "ow" sounds and looking rather pathetic in general
- I'm surprised they didn't call out "black guy always dies first", which itself is a trope now. But I don't think there are any black characters in this movie. Woopsie! Guess they waited for the sequel.
- Our virginal final girl, Sidney, actually gets laid and still survives! Girl power!
- Woopsie! Sidney accidentally got laid by a killer. The killer turns out to be two dudes rather than one scary monster. They're typical high school boys, prolly a reference to the rise of school shootings in the 90's.



"SCREAM" is still an important movie! It's just that, much like "HALLOWEEN", it seems like a standard horror movie now that films gone through deconstruction and reconstruction.





GINGER SNAPS

(2000)

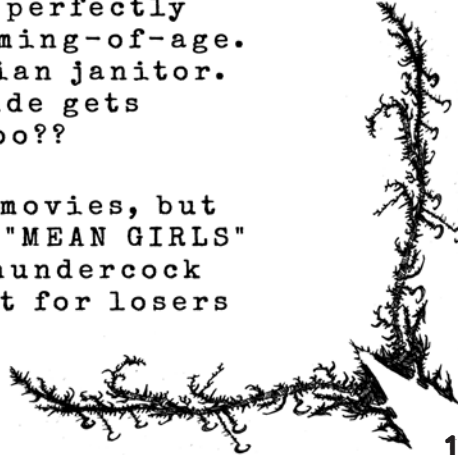
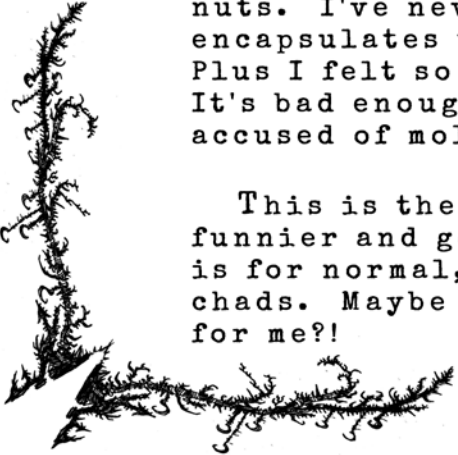
"OH YEAH, LIKE I REALLY WISH I WERE HEMORRHAGING,
HAIRY, AND SUCKING OFF JASON MCCARTY."

Classic werewolf movies frame the transformation as a man's struggle with humanity, attempting to retain MANKind's civilized MANner. Hehe. But isn't the lore of a creature, that bursts forth once a month, and gives in to mother nature's call for blood, such a stereotypically feminine concept?

I hadn't watched this movie til Le Sueur's class, yet it immediately felt nostalgic. That late 90's - early 2000's era of girly hippiegoth teen culture. The costume design eschews the standard tartan/fishnet/eyeliner hot topic movie goth look for legit loser attire of baggy clothes (to hide your ugly body!) and unfashionable boots (they're comfy and make you feel safe!). Clipping herbs and flowers and sticking plants in bottles... Imagining as many ways to die as possible, and laying there pretending you were dead... now that's a relatable text post!

Brigitte and Ginger's relationship feels REAL, yo. They're best friends ripped apart with Ginger's newfound interest in mediocre sex, ugly boys, and raping + killing people, and boy that hit me in the nuts. I've never seen a movie that so perfectly encapsulates that specific sort of coming-of-age. Plus I felt so damn bad for the old Asian janitor. It's bad enough that the rare asian dude gets accused of molestation, but he dies too??

This is the "MEAN GIRLS" of horror movies, but funnier and gorier with werewolves. "MEAN GIRLS" is for normal, socially acceptable, thundercock chads. Maybe "GINGER SNAPS" was meant for losers for me?!







SAW (2004)

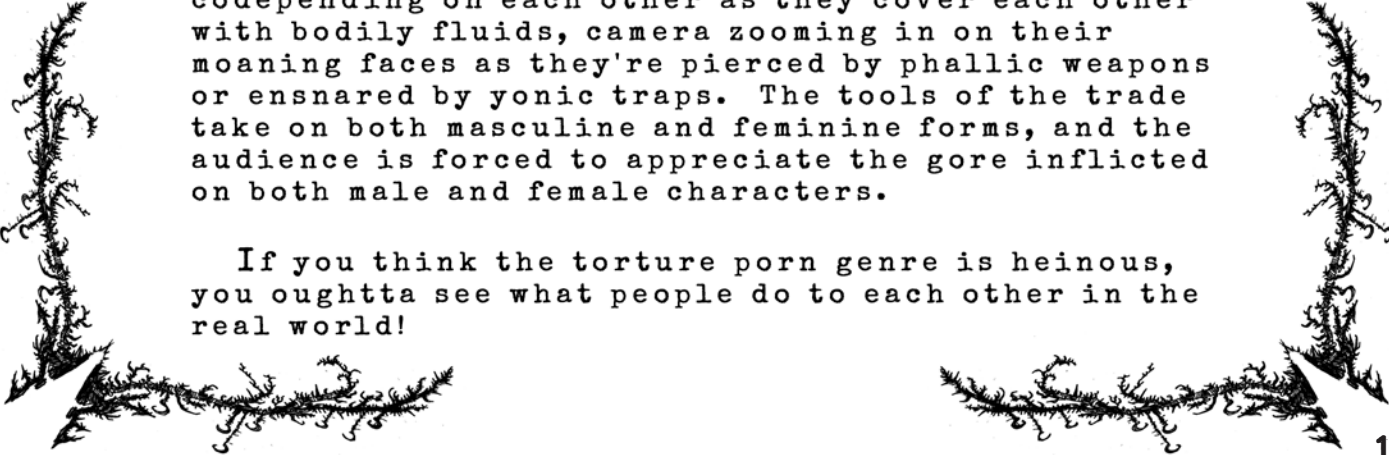
"THIS IS THE MOST FUN I'VE HAD WITHOUT LUBRICANT!"

The progenitor of so-called torture porn and surveillance horror!

As the Vietnam War inspired decades of traumatized media, 9/11 and the War on Iraq would do the same for 2000's horror movies. Why torture porn? Because America itself was torturing, and taking pornographic evidence of its crimes. C'mon, our director Wan is non-American yet insists on giving his characters American accents, there's just something about the USA! Jigsaw claims he's teaching a lesson to humanity, and his monitored dungeon and surveillance footage mirror the photos from Guantanamo Bay. And with the rise of the internet and shock sites (Rotten, Stile, Liveleak) anybody could become a sadistic voyeur and look up real images of torture and death.

The torture porn genre is rather bisexual in its porn victims, rather than solely sexualizing the pain of women like most horror films. "SAW" focuses on the shared pain of its two male characters: forced into physical and emotional claustrophobia, codepending on each other as they cover each other with bodily fluids, camera zooming in on their moaning faces as they're pierced by phallic weapons or ensnared by yonic traps. The tools of the trade take on both masculine and feminine forms, and the audience is forced to appreciate the gore inflicted on both male and female characters.

If you think the torture porn genre is heinous, you oughtta see what people do to each other in the real world!



Pussy
is Pussy





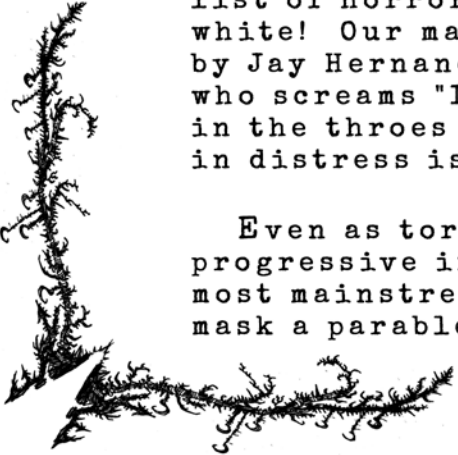
HOSTEL

(2005)

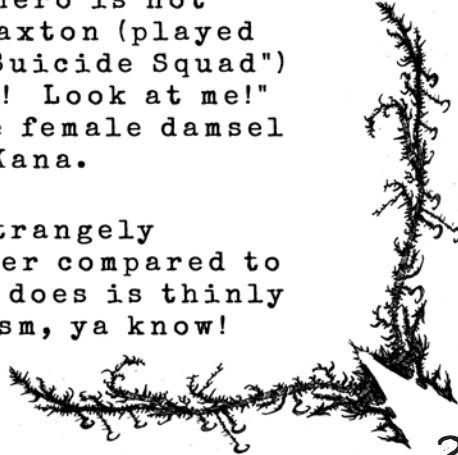
"I GET A LOT OF MONEY FOR YOU,
AND THAT MAKES YOU MY BITCH."

One killer client in this film states that he's bored of "pussy", "it's all the same shit", hence why he's moved to dismemberment and death. Once again sex is blood, blood is sex! Didja know Eli Roth's "HOSTEL" is the reason why we have the term "torture porn?"

The frothy mixture of sex and violence is plain, and the gender play is simple but fun. Americans (those guys again?!) travel overseas for sex tourism, preying on supposedly easy women. The women they objectify turn a trick on the tourists, enslaving them into a murder trafficking ring. The camera sexualizes its multitude of male murder victims even more explicitly than "SAW". Lingering shots of sweaty, moist manflesh intercut faster and faster into abstractly orgiastic screams of pain, and the spent bodies ejaculate blood as they climax in death! Through film magic, moviegoers have spent 2 hours watching symbolic man-jizzing-on-man action. Dope.



Curiously, this is the only other film on this list of horror classics in which the hero is not white! Our main man is the Mexican Paxton (played by Jay Hernandez, also El Diablo in "Suicide Squad") who screams "I'm not fucking American! Look at me!" in the throes of torture, and our sole female damsel in distress is a Japanese girl named Kana.



Even as torture porn, "Hostel" is strangely progressive in terms of race and gender compared to most mainstream films. All the blood does is thinly mask a parable on ignorant consumerism, ya know!



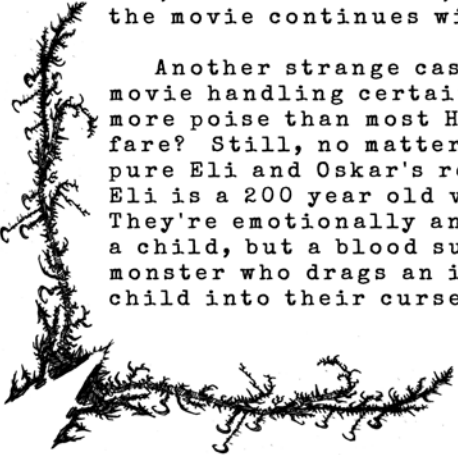


LET THE RIGHT ONE IN (2008)

"IF I WASN'T A GIRL,
WOULD YOU LIKE ME ANYWAY?"

We descend from hot sticky torture into snowy melancholy for our final film. It's the emotionally softest horror movie possible, and it's still hella dank n dark n dope. Wouldn't you give your life feeding an eternally hungry beast because of what you think is love?

A minor but fascinating element in the movie is the androgynous Eli's gender: "I'm not a girl". Our hero Oskar has developed a crush on Eli based on assuming they are a lonely girl just as he is a lonely boy, yet these words do not phase him or their relationship. Usually, "gender reveal" moments in mainstream media are treated with shock, disgust, revulsion to the point of murder, or overcompensated guilty fawning. But, in this instance, the rest of the movie continues without a halt.

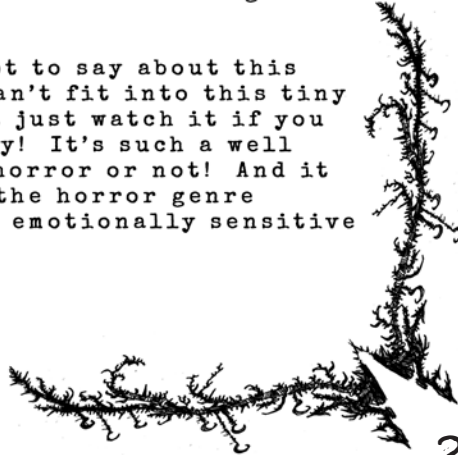


Another strange case of a horror movie handling certain themes with more poise than most Hollywood fare? Still, no matter how sweet n' pure Eli and Oskar's romance seems, Eli is a 200 year old vampire. They're emotionally and physically a child, but a blood sucking monster who drags an innocent child into their curse nonetheless!

One could argue the portrayal of a transgender/nonbinary character as a monster is not ideal. I would say Eli's cursed, emotionally soul-snaring nature is simply an aspect of common vampire symbolism. There is no other connection in the movie between Eli's gender and their monstrous aspect. Eli simply happens to be a vampire, as well as... not a girl. That's it, and it's cool.

More sinister than anything Freddy's done, the very real horror of pedophilia pervades the film. The vampire Eli lives with an old man, explicitly described in the book as a pedophile. The American version of the film (peaps inappropriately) dubs him "The Father", who met Eli when he himself was a child and still loves them in his old age. I don't know if it's intentional or not, but the American version dumps incest into the cauldron along with pedophilia.

There's a lot to say about this movie that I can't fit into this tiny space, so like, just watch it if you haven't already! It's such a well crafted film, horror or not! And it stands out in the horror genre because of how emotionally sensitive it gets. DOPE!



V/H/S AND THE CULT OF HETEROSEXUALITY



an essay by maggie

(this was my final for Le Sueur's class! it still has some decent ideas in it,
though the writing is... insomniac)



The film V/H/S showcases six different stories, all ostensibly linked by the use of POV surveillance camera as a framing device, though there is more to be gathered by delving deeper. Although V/H/S is composed of multiple scattered narratives, all the stories display the heterosexual male ego in some manner that usually results in punishment of the masculine victim-aggressor. As a result, the female characters are strangely simultaneously demonized and empowered through this indictment of obnoxious male behavior, making V/H/S an interesting satire of heterosexual dynamics whether the directors meant for it or not.

The male versus female dynamic is clearly seen in the opening sequence of the film, in which a group of young men destroy property, break into houses, and violently as well as sexually assault women for fun and quick cash. Of the next five stories, three are again based on a group of males looking for fun and sex, while the other two revolve around rocky romantic relationships between a man and a woman. The plots are based on and compelled by preconceived notions of heterosexuality, with men acting as horny pigs obsessed with partying and feeling entitled to sex. The viewer expects the female characters to obey these gender roles as well, acting as weak and helpless waifs, and yet expectations are subverted as women quickly become the object of horror. V/H/S completely immerses itself in generic gender tropes, and yet (whether consciously or not), there is a noticeable and intentional power shift from male to female as the plots progress.

The first short film, "Amateur Night", demonstrates this power shift very aptly by starting off with the men exercising their power over women, and ending with those men dead at the hands of the female character they attempt to take advantage of. The group of young male characters - are typical "dude-bro" college frat types who barhop and hook up with girls for one night stands, cheering each other on as they score with hot chicks. They have a nerdy male friend who they've outfitted with a pair of spy camera glasses to record the sexual encounters, perhaps because his dude-bro friends do not expect for him to get laid. As expected, there are many scenes of the men ogling at women and getting intimate with them while winking at each other about their amateur porno plans.

The turning point comes when one of their female companions passes out drunk in their hotel bed after a heavy makeout session. Strangely enough, rather than the neanderthalic male response of wanting to have sex with (basically rape) the woman while she's unconscious, the dudebro is told by his friend to stop and move on to the remaining conscious girl. This act of moral consciousness is an extremely short part of the film, but rings poignantly because it directly subverts the rape culture that we'd expect these frat boys to propagate. Still, however, the dude-bros continue to kiss and grope the remaining girl, Lily, eventually completely undressing her while she sneers and glares at the dude-bros. Lily constantly whispers to the nerdy boy, "I like you," and hisses at the other men while they make sexual advances, making it clear that she's only interested in the nerd. The power is completely shifted in Lily's favor when she exercises her right to choose her own sexual partner. Lily bites out the throats of the dudebros, rips off various limbs, and claws off one of the dudebros's penises, tossing the limp weiner at the camera. This castration is Lily's solid statement that she does NOT want these men anywhere near her, and is an act of literally taking away their masculinity and asserting her own dominance. Lily then makes her move on the remaining nerd, attempting to perform fellatio on him and growing despondent when the nerd responds with fear and disgust. With tears in her eyes at the nerd's rejection of her affection, she kidnaps the nerd and they shriek into the night sky.

The entire set-up and horror punchline of the story depends on the male ego's expectations of women. Once a woman subverts those expectations she becomes a unattractive monstrous bitch to the man, seen in an extremely exaggerated (and somewhat humorous) way when the nerd rejects Lily after she's exerted her dominance over the dude-bros. Of course, Lily isn't totally a feminist icon because the horror of the film is supposedly the men finding out that a girl they picked up is a vampire succubus, but she displays many feminist traits paralleling her namesake Lilith, Adam's first wife in Hebrew myth.

Lilith "who like Adam was taken from the earth"[1], stands in stark contrast to Eve, who was created from Adam's rib and as such is completely dependent on Adam for her existence rather than Lilith's individualized birth. Lilith parts ways with Adam and is subsequently demonized because "Adam, as a way of asserting his authority over Lilith, insisted that she lie beneath him during sexual intercourse (23 A-B). Lilith, however, considering herself to be Adam's equal, refused, and after pronouncing the Ineffable Name (i.e. the magic name of God) flew off into the air." Adam Wingard, who directed the Amateur Night sequence, seems to have taken much inspiration from the Lilith myth, with his Lily mirroring many of the very same characteristics that demonized Lilith. Lily is forced to lie underneath a dude-bro asserting his authority as he kisses and gropes her, much like Lilith did with Adam. Lily retaliates by not only refusing but also flipping the dude-bro underneath her and devouring him, just as Lilith's myth paints her "as a female demon...drinking the blood of men, and eating their flesh..." Lily asserts her own authority over the Adam-like dude-bros by choosing the mate she wants and grabbing him to fly off into the night with her, mirroring the dude-bro's party tactics of picking up drunk chicks in their car. Both Lily and Lilith refused to bow down to a man's sexual authority, and took it upon themselves to escape their situations and retain their independence, even if it meant becoming a fearful demon in the end.

Every other film in V/H/S, save for the opening wraparound, follows the same basic narrative as "Amateur Night": men are out for a good time and to fulfill their ego, and a woman instigates the horror by questioning authority. In "Second Honeymoon", the night stalker is revealed to be the lesbian lover of the man's wife, who kills the husband (shown to have Adam-like tendencies of goading his wife into sexual acts) so that the two women are free to be with each other. In "Tuesday the 17th", Wendy is frustrated that the police have been useless in helping her track down the murderer of her friends, and she uses her sex-hungry male friends as flesh bait during a camping trip to lure out the glitchy murderer. In "The Sick Thing That Happened to Emily When She Was Younger", the titular Emily is haunted by small children while she performs self-surgery on a bump in her arm (all while her boyfriend tells her to stop taking care of herself and wait for him to tell her what it is), and it is revealed that her controlling boyfriend implanted a tracking device in her arm as well as manipulating Emily with the child-like ghosts to incubate fetuses in her, as well as having another girlfriend he's been incubating aliens with on the side. And in the final segment, "10/31/98", there are both the group of party frat-boys and the group of male witch hunters who are fighting over a possessed woman's life. The witch hunters obviously want the destroy the women, and the frat-boys have sort of a white male savior complex which urges them to take the woman and run, leading to the deaths of all men involved when the woman breaks free of their control. Every film in V/H/S revolves around parodying the stereotypical alpha male and the subversion of typical heterosexual relationships, and it is no coincidence considering the history of the horror genre.

V/H/S is not a pristine feminist film despite all the interesting implications of its narratives. If the horror aspect is based on female empowerment and male death at the hands of a woman, doesn't that endorse the status quo and vilify those who oppose it? Furthermore, every single director in the film is a man, and it would not be incorrect to presume that their certain male interests are driving some of the film-making choices. The horror trope of gratuitous female nudity and young adult sexuality is in full force, breasts bouncing around right directly in front of the camera in almost every film in V/H/S for the viewer's pleasure (Both the audience and whichever character is holding the film camera, bless the found-footage genre). It is however, noticeable that the films do not censor male nudity as other films would, and show some degree of homoeroticism. In "Amateur Night", one of the dude-bro's penises (the same penis which is later ripped off and tossed at the camera) is shown swaying around for a good five seconds in the bathroom after the owner of the penis runs away from Lily. Naked male buttocks are just as prominent as lady lumps, and the cinematography does not shy away from forcing the male gaze to look at manparts. Even more obviously homoerotic is the relationship in "Second Honeymoon" between the estranged wife and the killer. The wife rejects her husband's attempts to film them kissing and having sex, yet she passionately kisses the killer (in the exact same location in front of the bathroom mirror) after her husband is dead. Even before the husband is killed, the killer makes a short excursion through their motel room and caresses the sleeping wife's thigh, staring at her lacy underwear and buttocks through the camera lens.

The surprise lesbians in "Second Honeymoon" could be read as yet another appeasement of the heterosexual male ego despite it's obvious female homosexuality however. Beautiful lesbians being intimate are

a typical heterosexual male fantasy, because feminine lesbians are safe and titillating homosexuals as opposed to unattractive gay men and butch lesbians, and we get a gratuitous scene of the lesbians shoving their tongues in each other's throat for our enjoyment. Yet, these lesbians are not portrayed for simple straight male enjoyment. Fantasy mixes with nightmare, and pleasure with pain in the horror genre, and the lesbian sequence comes across as yet another strange play on heterosexual gender roles and the audience's assumptions. "Second Honeymoon" is extremely reminiscent of the music video for The Prodigy's "Smack My Bitch Up", which follows the drug-fueled sex and violence rampage of an almost anonymous camera-person directly through their POV. The protagonist snorts coke and shoots up heroin, aggressively gropes women and claws at their genitals and breasts, gets into fights with men, runs over a pedestrian, and takes a stripper home to have rowdy sex with her. The film plays on the audience's expectations that it is a heterosexual man doing all these aggressive dirty deeds (especially because the protagonist is exclusively pursuing women and enters a men's bathroom to vomit blood and shoot up smack), just as V/H/S leads the viewer to assume the aggressor is a man. And just like V/H/S, in "Smack My Bitch Up", "we end up realising that what seems like a gross male fantasy has actually been experienced by a woman," a subversion of gender expectations by "celebrating their glorious pantomime of twisted masculinity"[2]. Of course, violence against women and objectification of women is still violence and objectification, especially when done by a male director, as is the case with "Smack My Bitch Up" and V/H/S. Critics considered the "shock-value" gender subversion of "Smack My Bitch Up" "boorish" and "tired-out" even back in 1997 when the controversial song came out.

Suzanne Moore of the Independent deemed that "what we are hearing, we are told, is a pose, a parody of masculinity, a warped fantasy of power from men whose own sense of themselves is in crisis. To which one can only reply, it's not funny, it's not clever and it's not even particularly new,"[2] in regards to The Prodigy's attempt at playing with heterosexual norms, and much of the same can be said of V/H/S's gender subversions. The premises of all the narratives rely on society being misogynistic in order to subvert and shock those expectations, and the shock value and horror comes from the assumption the viewer subscribes to heteronormative values. However, "Even confused young men realise that they are more complex creatures than such a culture allows,"[2] and at least by playing with heteronormativity the directors acknowledge that society IS misogynistic and heteronormative and that the male ego is a ridiculous beast. Until non-male directors are much more prominent in the filmmaking world, the male perspective is all audiences will see. V/H/S takes small creative risks via its POV found-footage filmmaking and short-story structure, and these small narrative subversions are baby steps as well towards fresher filmmaking.



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